

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 8, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write with regards to the reported discussions between the United States and the Republic of Turkey on the sale of F-16 fighter jets and modernization kits in relation to Sweden's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). If an agreement for the sale of F-16s and modernization kits to Turkey is under consideration, we strongly urge that any final agreement must include mechanisms that provide for the pause, delay, or snapback of the transfer of such weapons if Turkey engages in actions that threaten or undermine U.S. national security interests and the unity of the NATO alliance.

While Russia's invasion of Ukraine has underscored the importance of NATO unity, Turkey has continued to hold Sweden's accession to NATO hostage in order to obtain F-16s and modernization kits from the United States. Despite this, according to published reports, State Department officials have recently been meeting with Congressional leaders tasked with approving weapon sales to ensure Congress "won't undercut them if they seek a deal with Turkey that ties the F-16 sale to Ankara's approval of Sweden."

We are concerned with this report given the Administration's consistent declarations that F-16 sales are not linked to Sweden's accession. As it becomes increasingly clear the Administration is using every tool at its disposal to pressure Congress and relevant stakeholders into approving the sale of F-16s and modernization kits to Turkey, it is imperative that any agreement must safeguard greater NATO security interests, and not merely the accession of Sweden.

Turkey's belligerence in the region – which threatens the very "stability in the Aegean" praised by both President Biden and National Security Advisor Sullivan in recent readouts – must end for the U.S. to responsibly transfer new weapons to Ankara. There must be guarantees that preclude American weapons being used to provoke a conflict within NATO. Given Turkey's history of using American F-16s for overflights in the Aegean and to challenge Greek sovereignty, we request mechanisms that provide for the pause, delay, or snapback of the transfer of American weapons to Turkey if it resumes its destabilizing actions in the Eastern Mediterranean that threaten or undermine U.S. national security interests or NATO security architecture.

As you know, after notifying Congress of the intention to move forward with the sale of U.S. defense articles, the U.S. government will respond to the country's Letter of Request with a Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA), which details the terms, conditions, and oversight mechanisms governing the articles covered under the sale. Additionally, all U.S. defense articles sold, leased, or exported under the Arms Export Control Act (AECA) are subject to end-use monitoring to ensure that the recipient is complying with the requirements imposed by the U.S. government with respect to use, transfers, and security of the articles to ensure compliance with U.S. arms export rules and policies. After the agreement is finalized, it is then incumbent upon the U.S. government to implement end-use monitoring as required by U.S. law and specified within the terms of the LOA.

There is not only precedent for imposing conditions on the sale of defensive weapons, but Congress has also already voiced support for attaching conditions to such a sale. In the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the House of Representatives passed an amendment which would establish reasonable limitations on the Administration's ability to transfer F-16 aircraft and F-16 modernization kits to Turkey. This provision passed the House on a bipartisan basis and with 73% of Members voting in favor.

While we welcome the present pause in Turkey's destabilizing actions in the region, it is important to stress the Erdogan government has not changed policy. The impression that Turkey has improved relations with NATO ally Greece is belied by the fact that Ankara maintains a *casus belli* against Athens.

Turkey also continues to possess Russian S-400 missile systems, the purchase of which – due to collocation concerns – was the basis for Turkey's ejection from the F-35 program in 2019. As previously stated in a letter sent to you in November 2021, experts have noted that providing Turkey modernization kits poses similar collocation risks so long as Turkey possesses Russian S-400s. Turkey's belligerent behavior towards Greece – a truly reliable, democratic NATO ally – and the threat of its continued possession of S-400s to NATO's security architecture cannot go unaddressed as the Administration considers an agreement with the Turkish government.

The Administration has an obligation to ensure that U.S.-provided F-16s are not used to undermine U.S. national security interests, stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the NATO alliance. As such, if an agreement for the sale of F-16s and modernization kits to Turkey is under consideration, any agreement must include clear and substantive mechanisms to provide for the pause, delay, or snapback of the transfer of such weapons if Turkey engages in actions that threaten or undermine U.S. national security interests and the unity of the NATO alliance.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes
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